

2020

ComMuniTy- 2020

Department Staff

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ComMuniTy

Department of Communication, Media and Theatre

Welcome to the tenth issue of **ComMuniTy**, the official newsletter of the Department of Communication, Media and Theatre (CMT) at Northeastern Illinois University. **ComMuniTy** maintains contact with CMT alumni, informs current students about the program, and celebrates our successes. This has been an incredibly challenging year for everyone due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and our university and department had to adapt in unprecedented ways. Despite these difficulties, our students and faculty still had tremendous accomplishments. Keep reading to learn more!

The CMT faculty continued with excellent research and creative activity and were recognized for awards during the past year. They also used their quarantine time in interesting ways.

Edie Rubinowitz was awarded a full-year sabbatical to do Solutions Journalism reporting for Chicago Public Radio and also develop a new 300-level Podcasting and Audio Documentary course that will be offered for the first time in the fall 2021 semester.

G. Max Maxin IV was nominated for several awards this past year. He was nominated for Best Projection Design for *Ghost Quartet* with Black Button Eyes Productions in the 2019 Non-Equity Jeff Awards. He also designed Lighting and Projections for *Head Over Heels* with Kokandy Productions, *Big Fish* at the BoHo Theatre, and *Ghost Quartet* with Black Button Eyes productions. All three shows were nominated for Best Musical, and *Big Fish* won the award.

Matthew Sage curated and streamed more than 20 hours of live music from more than 20 artists around the world during the COVID-19 lockdown via Cached.Media Longform Series. The project raised \$2,600 in August and October to support social justice causes locally, nationally, and abroad.

Kate Kane retired after teaching at NEIU for the past seventeen years, plus she got married in Minnesota!

Dan Wirth had his adaptation of “The Cherry Orchard” performed by marionettes in the The Great Barrington Public Theater’s “Bear Tales - Six Feet Together” online theatre festival.

Shayne Pepper wrote an article titled “Cultural Programming and the Early History of HBO’s Signature Style (1978-1988),” and it will be published in the *Journal for Cinema and Media Studies* in late 2022. He also spent the year learning how to play piano and enjoying the two new Taylor Swift albums.

Adam Goldstein directed *Mamma Mia* at the Edge Theatre, *Daphne Becomes the Arctic* at the Mid-American Theatre Conference, and *The Lady’s Guide to Mountains* at the Piven Theatre Workshop. He was also the Dialect Designer and Coach for several productions including *The Wickhams, X, MLima’s Tale, The Total Bent,* and *Light Falls* at theaters across the Chicago area.

Sarah Fabian had a baby girl!

Jeff Wade, a McHenry County Audubon Society member, volunteered to be an observer and informal host during the group’s “In Search of Eagles” event. It took place at three locations along the Fox River and brought a crowd of more than forty people to learn about American Bald Eagles in Illinois.

Maura Cherney had a research paper titled “Warranting Theory Considered in the Context of Information Integration: A Breakthrough of Barriers Between CMC and Cognitive Psychology” accepted to the Central States Communication Association conference, and she also presented a paper titled “An Explicit Test of the Assumptions of Warranting Theory” at the National Communication Association Conference in Baltimore. Maura also got married this year!

Since we were unable to have our standard in-person commencement ceremonies this year, the CMT Department had two **virtual celebrations** for our graduating students via Zoom (one in May and one in December.)

Thanks to the tremendous generosity from donors on **#GivingTuesday**, the CMT department raised \$2,850 dollars during this fundraiser. That was nearly triple our original goal! This money will directly support students in need of financial assistance.



CMT Alumni Spotlight: Zachary Gingold (B.A. 2011)
Lead Partner Manager @ Twitter
Co-Founder of Birdhouse New Media

In my last year at NEIU, I became very interested in Twitter. This was in 2011, and the service was still fairly new. I was in awe of how the platform had the ability to connect people from all over the world in real time. At NEIU I was a Communication, Media and Theatre major, and the classes I attended really pushed me to think critically in ways I previously hadn't. I began to question and analyze all that was around me, and I soon noticed that while most companies were interested in using social media for marketing, nobody was doing it that well.

I got together with a couple of friends who specialized in web design and SEO, and we launched a startup called Birdhouse New Media that focused on digital marketing. We successfully onboarded a number of local Chicago businesses that we identified as successful companies but that lacked a strong digital marketing presence. After a couple of years, all three of us were approached by different agencies and tech companies for career opportunities. We spun down Birdhouse, and I went to work at a digital media and publishing company, specializing in digital media strategy, and I eventually landed at Twitter where I work today as a Partnerships Lead.



I've been with Twitter for six years now, and currently I manage the business relationships with our Twitter Official Partners, helping them navigate the social and digital landscape and working to deliver the best social solutions to brands, agencies, and publishers. The critical thinking skills, media analysis, and love for what at the time was considered "new media studies" that I acquired at NEIU are all what led me on a successful career path.

Interested in learning more about our Master's degree program in CMT?
 Email Dr. Seung-Hwan Mun (s-mun@neiu.edu) for more information.

RECENT ALUMNI UPDATES

Melissa Brand (B.A. 2014) is an accounting coordinator at 3L Real Estate in Rosemont. In August 2020 she was accepted into a master's degree program in Communication at Purdue University with a concentration in strategic communication and public relations.

Thomas Kretzler (M.A. 2019) has been teaching at the College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn and will mark two years of teaching in May 2021. He says that he has found teaching Speech Communication at the college level to be quite rewarding.

Sophia Swenson (B.A. 2018) moved to Minneapolis and worked at the Guthrie Theatre where she had the privilege to participate in the endorsement, development, and world premiere of Lynn Nottage's play *Floyd's*. Sophie also worked at Mixed Blood Theatre and was commissioned to write and produce a full-length play for Minnesota's Fringe Festival, resulting in *Thirteen*, which is scheduled for summer 2021. She is currently living in Colorado and applying to MFA programs in Creative Writing to pursue her writing career in theatre/TV/film.

Leslie Hurtado (B.A. 2020) spent her time at NEIU as a News Editor for the *NEIU Independent*, an Audio Producer at the Lit + Luz Festival, a Community Reporter covering the COVID-19 beat for the *Cicero Independiente*, and an intern at the WGN Morning News. After graduation, Leslie started a paid position as a News Intern at WBEZ Chicago helping the news team to research and write stories as well as produce radio packages.

Madeleine Panos (B.A. 2018) was accepted to Widener University Law School.

Daniela Vitale (B.A. 2006) graduated from NEIU and started a career in college recruitment and admissions counseling. In recent years she has also followed her passion to launch Sfera Sicilian Street Food, which has a pick-up and delivery location near our El Centro campus.

Merva Morina (B.A. 2015, M.A. 2020) works as a Fielding Coordinator at InsightsNow, a market research company, where she assists in the development of consumer claims research.

Calling All CMT Alumni!

If you would like to be included in our next newsletter and on our website, or if you need to update your contact info, please email us at cmt@neiu.edu

CMT STUDENT PROJECTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Despite the difficulties of a pandemic, our CMT students have been incredibly active. They have created videos and performances, launched podcasts, published stories in numerous places, and have not let the strange year of 2020 stop them from being successful.

Our journalism students have been working across various media. **Jarrell Hightower** published print and audio versions of a story at WBEZ Chicago. This story focused on how the Confess Project is working to train Black barbers to be mental health advocates. **Amaris E. Rodriguez** and **Ata Younan** both published several stories at *Borderless Magazine*. Several of Amaris' stories have also been picked up by Univision, WBEZ, and have been featured on WTTW.

Recent alumni launched three different podcasts this year. **Karina Vargas-Camacho** launched the "NEIU Happy Hour" podcast in her senior year, **Leslie Hurtado** and **Diane Boukhalil** launched the "Rabiosa Medina Radio" podcast over the summer, and **David Montalvo** launched the "Outlet to Reality" podcast.

This fall semester, students in the CMTM 366: Multimedia Storytelling class created quite a few projects. **Yesenia Esteban**, **Jade Bolden**, **Ryland Pietras**, and **Joseph Harris** all had their audio stories featured in the "Pantry Podcast" on WZRD. **Jack Poskus**, **Ryland Pietras**, **Afiolasade Fadahunsi**, and **Yesenia Esteban** had their video documentaries and mockumentaries chosen to appear on the CMT YouTube channel.

Mara Galeno's original play titled "The Better Life" was featured in New York City's 2020 Player's Theatre Short Play Festival. Mara wrote and co-directed the play, which starred **Susana Acevedo**, **Javonti Mordican**, **Leonardo Aranda**, and **Clarybelle Camacho**.

Preksha Desai worked as a college ambassador for the Goodman Theatre.

Many of our CMT students contributed their original work to our Digital Theatre Festival for Social Justice including: **Lisa Harriman**, **Raeghn Draper**, **Afiolasade Fadahunsi**, **Sean McLennan**, **Daphne Watson**, **Alinne Tapia**, **Emma Browne**. These student projects are all available on the CMT YouTube channel.

This year we inducted our first group of twenty-three outstanding CMT students into the **Lambda Pi Eta** Communication Honors Society.

Anthony Guerrero successfully defended his master's thesis titled "The Power of Drag: Performance, Activism, and Self-Expression" in November 2020. He also had his research accepted for presentation at several conferences including the National Communication Association, Queertopia 2020, and the Midwestern Conference on Literature, Language, and Media, and the Lavender Languages and Linguistics Conference.



The CMT Department had its first ever virtual thesis defense over zoom for Anthony Guerrero (M.A. 2020).



Check Out More Student Projects
on the CMT YouTube Channel:
www.youtube.com/cmtneiu

2019-2020 Student Award Winners

Brommel-Adams-Bell-Jordan Scholarship
Susanne Pawlikowski

Brommel-Denson-Everson-Snell Scholarship
Trey Grant & Tyler Rose

Brommel-Hanson-Ijams-Hayward Scholarship
Daphne Watson

Brommel-Kramer-Barnitz Scholarship
Jose Moreno Cruz

Brommel-Levy-Staniec Scholarship
LaShae Parker

Brommel-McGee Scholarship
Charles Sipps

CMT Distinguished Student Award
Cassidy Schmidt, Charles Sipps, Daphne Watson,
Rebecca Denham, Nicole Pacelli, & Raeghn Draper

Anna Antaramian Excellence in Theatre Award
Abbey Kruse, Charles Sipps, & Leo Aranda



STAGE CENTER THEATRE

Stage Center Theatre is NEIU's resident producing theatre and provides a vital entertainment, enrichment, and social forum to the University and the Chicagoland community. Each season, Stage Center Theatre produces a new play festival and contest, three full

mainstage productions for all audiences, and two Children's Theatre Workshop productions for the Chicago Public School audiences ranging from elementary to high school students. Stage Center Theatre's participants range from NEIU students, faculty, and staff in roles such as actors, stage managers, directors, designers, playwrights, and technical production staff. Since 1967, Stage Center Theatre has produced more than 250 plays on campus. Beginning July 1, Stage Center Theatre implemented a two-prong leadership structure to better serve the needs of its students, faculty and staff — **Adam Goldstein** serves as the Artistic Director and **Sarah J. Fabian** serves as the Managing Director.

The 2019-2020 academic year had great performances. Our season opened with our new play festival, *Nuevas Voces* founded by **Jim Blair** and directed by **Adam Goldstein**. This festival featured four new works, "Fear of the Little Things" by Shannon Naylor, "Frosted" by Ariel Notterman (B.A. 2019), "The Live It Up List"

by Emily Feldman, and "Too True to Be Good" by Shamus James Jarvis. SCT engaged in a two-year partnership with Filament Theatre located in Portage Park to produce *how to hero, or the subway play* by Georgette Kelly. Julie Ritchey (Artistic Director of Filament) and Christian Libonati (Managing Director) guest directed our mainstage production of Kelly's play in an intimate promenade immersive experience. Children's Theatre Workshop produced *we'll be better later* by Laura Jacqmin for Chicago Public Schools under the direction of **Adam Goldstein**. SCT opened the spring 2020 semester with Karen Zacarias' *Native Gardens* directed by **Leslie Hull**, which was a resounding success for its audiences. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19, our production of Laura Jacqmin's *Residence*, directed by **John Bliss**, was unable to move forward. Stage Center Theatre commends the cast, crew, and faculty who were already immersed in rehearsals for handling the cancellation so professionally. Like *Residence*, Children's Theatre Workshop's production of Lila Rose Kaplan's *Magic Fish* was cancelled due to Covid-19. This production would have been a fun experience under the direction of **Adam Goldstein** as puppets were in process of being designed and build by **Ellen O'Keefe** for the show.

While our season didn't conclude the way we would have hoped, we are excited for the programming to come as we adapt to the "new normal" of producing theatre for our audiences until we're able to share the same space again soon.

Stage Center Theatre Productions (2019-2020)

Nuevas Voces: 10-Minute Play Festival
Directed by Adam Goldstein

how to hero, or the subway play
Directed by Julie Ritchey
Artistic Director of Filament Theatre

Native Gardens
Directed by Leslie Hull

Residence
Directed by John Bliss

Children's Theatre Workshop

We'll Be Better Later (Fall 2019)
Directed by Adam Goldstein

Magic Fish (Spring 2020)
Directed by Adam Goldstein

Stage Center Theatre Productions (2020-2021)

Digital Theatre Festival for Social Justice
Directed by Leslie Hull

The Realistic Joneses
Directed by Dan Wirth

Nuevas Voces: 10-Minute Play Festival
Directed by Leslie Hull

A Doll's House, Part 2
Directed by John Bliss

Children's Theatre Workshop

Waterway (Fall 2020)
Directed by Adam Goldstein

A Bird About to Sing (Spring 2021)
Directed by Ellen O'Keefe

If you value your experience with the CMT community, please consider a financial contribution to the Department. We appreciate ANY size donation, whether it is \$4, \$40, or \$400! For more information, visit www.neiu.edu/cmt